Characters

- Madeline X:
- Lola Mae Duprae:
- Sonya Vovonovich:
- Schlomo Leviticus:

Act

The play is set in a room that is prepared for a private midnight circus. Balloons and streamers festoon the walls. Several ceiling fans spin above, and mammoth amounts of white flowers cascade near the ceiling.

The room is dominated, however, by a bright red wall at the rear. That red wall thrusts forward at a center fold, slanting back to the right and left on each side of the center, which intrudes aggressively into the square shape of the depicted room.

A cabinet stands to one side, mystical letters decorating its surface. Similar letters appear on the walls, which are filled with a variety of paintings, patterns, and three-dimensional skulls. All across the stage, from left to right just above head height, a narrow transparent plastic panel hangs embossed with backward letters that spell out "I've got the shakes" again and again to fill its entire length. From the center of the ceiling, a large upside-down head pours down tangled golden hair that stops only eight or nine feet above the carpeted floor. Lamps hang from the ceiling, and faintly visible on the red wall are cartoonlike figures — a rabbit and a mouse — each outlined in real flowers. Below them, at eye level, are numerous pads of yellow lined paper, attached to the walls all around the room. The floor is littered with discarded, crumpled pieces of this paper.

*A low electronic tone is heard faintly as the audience enters. When it is time for the play to begin, the tone rises in volume and everyone except **MADELINE X** enters suddenly and crosses to the cabinet. They turn back to look for her as the tone fades. The assembled group includes three elegant **CLOWNS**, two of them completely chalk white, including their faces, a third who is coal black, and a **RINGMASTER** ina red coat and hat. These four are onstage for most of the play, moving objects and furniture on and off, and occasionally joining the main characters in frantic dancing. The three characters who enter with the **CLOWNS** are **LOLA MAE DUPRAE**, wearing a white ribbon in her hair and loaded down with rings and bracelets; **SONYA VOVONOVICH**, dressed in a black silk sailor suit; and **RABBI SCHLOMO LEVITICUS**, wearing a dirty white apron and a black skullcap. The two women wear bright lipstick that has been smudged so it streaks across the lower half of their faces, making it appear as if they had been sloppily eating from a pot of red jam.*

***MADELINE X** appears and crosses through the group to open the cabinet. She wears a skimpy silk dress, very short, and tall sexy boots that rise to above her knees. On her head she wears a diamond tiara. Her lipstick is also smudged across her face.*

She leaves the cabinet, and then turns back to confront the group. In general, everyone throughout the play speaks quietly, as if to himself or herself. To facilitate this, each actor wears a headset with a radio microphone.

MADELINE X

Okay?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

*(Slowly pointing a threatening finger at **MADELINE X**)*

Careful . . .

*(**MADELINE X** turns and hurries off. The others assemble again in different parts of the room. Then **MADELINE X** slowly reappears. She is holding one end of a dirty white fringed cloth, which is shoulder high. **MADELINE X** slowly backs into the room while an invisible someone offstage holds the other end of the cloth so that as **MADELINE X** reaches the center of the room, the cloth, as she holds it taut, lengthens, its bottom just touching the floor.*

***SCHLOMO** approaches her, and as he gets close, she spins and releases the cloth, which falls to the floor, and **SCHLOMO** holds his nose, which has been hit accidentally by one of*

*her hands as she spins. A **CLOWN** picks up the end of the cloth and returns it to her, and she again pulls it taut)*

MADELINE X

Okay, ignorance.

*(The others gather for a brief discussion, then **SCHLOMO** kneels to **MADELINE X**)*

Yeah. You follow me this far?

*(She drops her cloth again, and this time falls on top of the kneeling **SCHLOMO**. She screams, recovers, and runs downstage as **SCHLOMO** mutters, "Oh, my back!" The **CLOWNS** lift the white cloth high behind **MADELINE X** as a backdrop, over the top of which we can see that the other three actors have climbed onto chairs for safety)*

Maybe what this room needs is a name — so it can exist in real space and time.

*(She runs into the cloth, pulling it up into a corner of the room, but the **CLOWNS** hold firm to the two ends, and it forms a slingshot which hurls **MADELINE X** downstage again into the arms of the waiting **RINGMASTER.** They pivot once from the collision as **MADELINE X** mutters, "Shit," and spins off and hits a wall. She recovers and approaches the others, who are now seated)*

The space inside this room is named ignorance.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(She speaks throughout the play with a heavy Southern accent)

But my goodness Madeline X, why do you feel the need to put such things into very awkward words?

MADELINE X

Because — awkward though my words may be, there is potential reward.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I just don't understand.

MADELINE X

If those words go on just a little bit longer through time and space —

*(A six-foot-tall primitive God mask painted red like the walls appears rear, as the **RINGMASTER** enters carrying a serving tray from which dangle two stuffed human legs)*

They make a bridge and I can stand on that bridge of words.

(She has taken a head that resembles her own from the cabinet and places it on the tray over the

legs)

Or at least, my head stands on that bridge of words. Not that a head stands, really — because it doesn't have legs, does it.

(She takes the head and, holding it high, circles the room as the others rip paper from the pads, crumple it, and throw it onto the floor. Then she loses control of the head and it falls down on her and she screams)

Careful!

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Who speaks with a Russian accent throughout the play)

What's wrong now?

MADELINE X

If one of my feet goes in the wrong direction, I tumble.

*(**LOLA MAE** runs and grabs one of the legs attached to the tray as **MADELINE X** grabs another and they spin excitedly with little screams of pleasure, but as the God mask exits, the **RINGMASTER** breaks free and hurries the tray with legs offstage)*

MADELINE X

Careful!

SONYA VOVONOVICH

What's wrong now?

MADELINE X

If one of my feet goes in the wrong direction — Me? I tumble.

*(Actors and **CLOWNS** are now assembled in two lines on each side of the stage, facing each other. A loud buzzer announces a blare of rhythmic music. All flap their arms, circle in place, then dance to the center, where each one steps on another's foot, and with a shout of pain all retreat to their two lines and spin, again flapping their arms. Then, as the volume of the music lowers, **MADELINE X** dances out alone, spins once, screams out as if she has twisted an ankle, and falls to the carpet. The others scream back at her and run to different parts of the room, laughing at her difficulty. The music has ended)*

MADELINE X

(After a pause, from the floor)

Okay. I didn't really fall down.

(She rises, and crosses to sit with the others)

That was a trick, but this is where the pain is involved.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

That's bullshit.

MADELINE X

It's not bullshit! It's not bullshit!

(She takes the hands of the two nearest her)

I'm supposed to do funny things based on my own life. That's part of the deal, but I come to the realization right now here in front of you — I, Madeline X, have in me no funniness.

(She rises and leaves them sadly)

That is — I have the form of funniness . . . but no funniness.

(There is a silence. The others are embarrassed even to look at her. Then her eyes light up)

I know. I'll be somebody who isn't funny.

(She takes a little golden hammer from off a shelf and holds it up six inches away from her head)

Oh, this is really gonna hurt.

*(She hits her head with the hammer, which makes a tiny "crash." At that moment the **CLOWNS** reappear in a conga line and start circling the room. A rhythmic tape is heard over the loudspeakers intoning to a drumming accompaniment, "Don't be alarmed, don't be alarmed." **MADELINE X** joins the end of the conga line)*

MADELINE X

(Shouting over the tape)

Let's turn on some more lights in this room!

*(The lights indeed brighten, and **MADELINE X** breaks away from the conga line, which then dissolves. Everybody stands and stares at her)*

Now you can see me all the better. Did that make me funnier?

(They turn away in embarrassment)

Well, I can see it didn't.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Oh, Madeline X —

*(Everyone applauds, and **LOLA MAE** thinks the applause is for her; she lifts her arms and sings out in operatic style)*

"Ohhhhh! Madeline X . . .?"

*(They applaud again, and she turns away delightedly. Then composing herself she turns back to **MADELINE X**)*

Since you resent the rest of us? Well, as much as you claim —

MADELINE X

Did I say that?

(The faint electronic hum is heard again. It comes and goes repeatedly throughout the play, highlighting different sections of the dialogue)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(As the others turn and tear off pieces of paper, which they crumple and throw to the floor. This happens repeatedly throughout the play)

Me — Sonya Vovonovich — says perhaps Madeline X should explain why the arena of your activity is oriented to people like us?

MADELINE X

(After a pause, in which she looks them over)

I might just look that up.

(She crosses to the cabinet, opens it, and starts tossing things to the floor in search of a heavy book, which she seizes, but which falls on her foot — and she responds with a scream. This is accompanied by a quiet version of the earlier dance music. This music, like the electronic hum, recurs again and again throughout the play, giving a special tone to selected parts of the dialogue)

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

*(As the others do a few dance steps to the quiet music. **SCHLOMO** speaks with a Yiddish accent throughout the play)*

Perhaps Madeline X chooses to proceed by a strategy of frustration?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Ours?

MADELINE X

No.

(She strides to the center of the room)

Mine.

(The others hiss at her, making gestures of disapproval)

Oh, this is really too painful.

(She runs out, almost in tears)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I bet soon little Miss Ambitious comes back.

*(All hiss toward where **MADELINE X** has exited)*

Okay. I know —

(She grabs a bouquet of red flowers)

Maybe tonight instead, I — Sonya Vovonovich — will assume her role or position or persona.

*(Now they turn and hiss at **SONYA**)*

Oh, this is really too painful.

*(She runs from the room, almost in tears. The others run out after her, as **MADELINE X** reappears rear, carrying a bouquet of red flowers. The music rises — only to be interrupted by a deafening crash of cymbals, which cuts off the music, and makes **MADELINE X** spin and drop her flowers from shock. She whispers to herself,*

"That's nice." She proceeds down toward the audience, then remembers her flowers and retrieves them)

MADELINE X

Me?

(She makes a gesture — which causes her to again drop her flowers. She looks down at them, but decides not to pick them up)

Madeline X. I have something to teach. But now what it is admittedly I don't know. But as you can see already I make myself . . . available, when I am in this teaching mode.

*(A **CLOWN** runs in rear with a white panel — a kind of elongated lozenge — and **MADELINE X** runs back to stand with her head against it as if it were a halo that stretches a full six feet up from the back of her head)*

Though I have in fact, nothing to teach.

*(The **CLOWNS** set out three panels, upon which a chair is painted. **LOLA MAE, SONYA**, and **SCHLOMO** each come and stand in front of a chair, ready to sit and receive instruction)*

Though I do. Which is to say, I don't know what I am teaching. But of course —

(She whirls once to faint music)

Madeline X IS teaching!

*(She exits, as the three others try to sit on the painted chair but fall to the floor, cursing to themselves. The chairs are repositioned elsewhere, and they run to try again, but again fall cursing, as the chairs disappear and **MADELINE X** reenters carrying a tiny globe of the earth)*

MADELINE X

Know this please! Outside of me a certain mastery exists. It's called the world.

(She lets her globe fall to the floor, frightening the others)

Everything the world does is masterful.

*(She is handed a larger globe, which has a little derby perched on top of it. She comes toward the audience, walking into the center of a string dotted black and white, which has been pulled across the stage by a **CLOWN** so that as her body pulls the center of that stringdown stage, the string echoes the intruding V shape of the rear red wall.)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

So what? The world is one hundred percent outside a person.

MADELINE X

Well, not one hundred percent.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

You mean outside is inside?

MADELINE X

Somewhat.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

So the mastery of the world is inside you, somewhat?

MADELINE X

I rest my case.

(She kisses her globe)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

What does this mean — "I rest my case"?

MADELINE X

Well — it's a little bit of the world, isn't it?

(She walks upstage and poses for a moment, lifting the string over her head like a pinup girl)

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(Praying at the cabinet)

Please die, Madeline X.

MADELINE X

You mean, die to myself of course?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

She's interrupting me!

(Their voices compete for a moment with a recording of voices singing, "I won't hurt you, I won't hurt you," which comes over the loudspeakers)

MADELINE X

How else should I react but by interrupting?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

You don't have to react.

MADELINE X

Then why speak to me?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

I rest my case.

(He stretches out his arms, and a globe is placed in each hand)

MADELINE X

What does that mean — "I rest my case"?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Take a good look.

*(As the **CLOWNS** remove the globes, **MADELINE X**, who has received a bouquet of red flowers from the **CLOWNS** in exchange for her globe, throws the red flowers to the floor)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Whirls and points to the flowers)

Look, the Rose Room!

SONYA VOVONOVICH

The Rose Room?

MADELINE X

Trash. I'm afraid what you bring me is one hundred percent trash, ladies.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Tearing paper from the wall)

That is the first answer. Now what do we bring you?

MADELINE X

I never fall into such traps

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

We bring you ourselves, Madeline X. And therefore we agree. Total trash.

*(There is a loud cymbal crash, which stuns everyone. They quickly recover and run and kneel to **MADELINE X**)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Total trash . . .

(They are overcome with shame and collapse to the floor)

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(From the floor)

How do we feel after that little faux pas?

MADELINE X

(She stares at them, then turns away)

Oh, this is really too painful.

*(A loud buzzer sounds. Music rises as all hell breaks loose. **MADELINE X** goes to a wheel of fortune on one of the walls. It's covered with playing cards and candy wrappers, and she spins it frantically by hand as **SCHLOMO** and **LOLA MAE** each run and seize six-foot-long beams of wood that lean against another wall. The beams are padded at one end so they look like big black thermometers,*

*and they run across the stage and crash the sticks against the wall on either side of **MADELINE X**. But the sticks are attacked by red elastic to their point of origin, so **SCHLOMO** and **LOLA MAE**, shaking and moaning from the impact, are pulled back across the stage to where they began. At the same time a small round table is carried on by a **CLOWN**, and the **RINGMASTER** places a white projection screen against the red wall. Another **CLOWN** hides behind a red curtain on a baton that he carries onstage lifted high enough to obscure his upper body and face. **MADELINE X** has stopped spinning her wheel and examines the front of the mysterious red curtain)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Shouting over the music)

Try. Try to do better!

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(As the music fades)

Which means worse, of course.

MADELINE X

Everything's under control, thank you.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

In that case, try harder.

MADELINE X

(Putting her hands against the red curtain)

Excuse me. Is this my stupidity at work — or my intelligence?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

We don't know.

MADELINE X

*(She crosses to the table, behind which **SCHLOMO** kneels)*

Test me by touching me.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

A better test is a kiss.

*(The **RINGMASTER** whisks away the red curtain for just a second — a **CLOWN** disguised as a white rabbit is momentarily revealed. **MADELINE X** turns and screams — and the rabbit is hidden again and hurries off behind his curtain)*

MADELINE X

I can't count the number of kisses I've already received.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

What are you going to do about that?

MADELINE X

I'm going to leave it to God.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

You're going to leave what to God?

*(The six-foot-tall God mask reenters and is immediately half covered by another red curtain held by the **RINGMASTER. SONYA** goes behind it and comes forth with a large red-wrapped gift package)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

What we'd all like right now — we'd all like to be initiated into cosmic truths.

MADELINE X

Oh yes. Oh yes, Rabbi, of course.

*(He is holding up another little golden hammer, and **MADELINE X** takes it and positions it six inches from her head)*

Shit. This is really gonna hurt.

(She smashes it against her head and moans)

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

You look distracted, Madeline X

MADELINE X

I've had bad news.

(The curtain and the God mask whirl)

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Let's not pay any attention.

MADELINE X

My one and only — Can I call him that, please?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Oh yes, yes do that, please.

(She exits with the package)

MADELINE X

My one and only left me a letter.

*(She grabs a letter from a tray a **CLOWN** holds out at the end of a long handle)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

After running away with the lady fire superintendent?

*(**MADELINE X** is reading the letter, then she lets it fall and turns to **SCHLOMO**)*

MADELINE X

Why did you say that?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

I think Schlomo Leviticus said, "A very attractive lady fire superintendent".

*(**MADELINE X** turns to see **SONYA** and **LOLA MAE** in the rear with white disks on the end of three-foot-long poles — each holding one of the disks in front of another's face. Maintaining this pose, they slowly drift offstage. **MADELINE X** turns back to **SCHLOMO**)*

MADELINE X

How did you know?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Maybe Schlomo Leviticus knows things.

MADELINE X

I didn't even know about a lady fire superintendent.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Please don't fixate on things, Madeline X.

MADELINE X

My life's a shambles, that's all!

(She finds a stack of papers, each with a drawing that might represent the face of the Lady Fire Superintendent, and she starts plastering them against the walls)

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Burn.

MADELINE X

What?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Burn!

MADELINE X

Easy to say.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Burn!

MADELINE X

Burn?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

It is a definitive function.

MADELINE X

Burn?

(She falls against a wall, then recovers)

I'll burn up.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

That teaches Schlomo Leviticus something.

MADELINE X

What?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

I don't know yet.

MADELINE X

How long will it take to find out?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Oh, it'll take quite a long time. Lots of things will have plenty of opportunity to go on happening, you very attractive lady —

(He gallantly kisses her hand, and she pulls away. He shrugs)

Take the word of Schlomo Leviticus.

*(A loud buzzer, and the electronic tone is suddenly very loud, and **MADELINE X** runs to spin the wheel again, as **SCHLOMO** grabs one of the big sticks and again crashes it into the wall next to her. At the same time, the white cloth returns and **LOLA MAE** and **SONYA** are wrapped in it, rocking back and forth like two orphans in an open boat in a stormy sea. They are immediately thrown to the floor as **MADELINE X** runs across the stage and hides her eyes and **SCHLOMO** goes to spin the wheel. **MADELINE X** calls out to him)*

MADELINE X

Now wait a minute, is it true you know how to navigate life's oceans, Rabbi?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(Still spinning the wheel as the tone fades)

This information is definitely available.

MADELINE X

Okay, Rabbi, burn, burn, burn, burn, burn, burn!

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(He turns to her)

My exact words reduced to the singular, of course.

MADELINE X

It sounds like multiple to me.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Yes —?

(He lifts his hands and wiggles his fingers over his head)

Multiple in flames.

MADELINE X

Oh, Rabbi, your hands are so expressive.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Could that be — cumulative life experiences?

MADELINE X

(Examining his hands)

I think it's just your fingers, Rabbi

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

They must be well exercised.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(At the rear of the stage, peering around a corner)

Sonya Vovonovich says, Look, the beloved approaches!

(A little red curtain is carried on rear, concealing the person behind it)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

This particular beloved would like to know — did Madeline X find the letter?

(She tears a paper from one of the pads on the wall, crumples it, and throws it to the floor)

MADELINE X

(Peeking behind the curtain)

I'm really surprised to see him here.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

This particular beloved is of two minds.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

My darling — we are all of two minds.

MADELINE X

(Leaving the curtain, coming downstage)

I'm torn to pieces. What a world!

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Sad, but there's no story in this.

MADELINE X

Please! This is the story of a man who decided to dress like a rabbit and went into the street looking for provocative women.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

When the circumstance is right, my darling, the impulse is hard to resist.

*(The **RINGMASTER** has given him a large hypodermic needle. He lifts **MADELINE X's** skirt, and gives her an injection in her behind)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I think there's somebody deciding —

*(**MADELINE X** gives a little scream from the sting of the injection)*

— to be very, very, stupid

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Lola Mae Duprae says, Who likes vanilla Popsicles like I like vanilla Popsicles?

(She is licking a Popsicle)

Ummm!

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(Backing away dizzily)

Hey —!

MADELINE X

What is it? What is it, Rabbi?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Oh, my God. I feel strange.

MADELINE X

Do you feel okay?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Not very. How do you feel after your injection?

MADELINE X

I feel fine.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

I think your injection is affecting me.

(He falls to the floor)

MADELINE X

How could that be?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Not everything is explainable.

MADELINE X

Oh, I'm sure there's an explanation.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(Still on the floor, struggling to rise)

Don't be foolish, Madeline X.

MADELINE X

Okay. However, if I'm a fool —

(She is repositioning the table so she can sit on it)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Leave the furniture alone!

MADELINE X

(She jumps up and sits provocatively on the table)

I can't help it, can I? I wonder if this is really happening to me or I'm just hallucinating. I mean — he gives me an injection, then I feel fine, but he seems to be suffering —

*(**SCHLOMO** is half up, and falls again to the floor with a heavy thud. **MADELINE X** turns and looks, then continues her train of thought)*

— the results of my injection. But maybe that's only how it appears to me, as a result of my injection. What would I do in this situation? Especially since it may or may not be real.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(From the floor)

Very much like somebody having a dream.

MADELINE X

Not quite. Whether or not it's dreaming maybe depends on your reaction.

*(The **RINGMASTER** enters with a world globe, which has a derby perched on top, and holds it against the illuminated movie screen)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Oh, no — whatever I'm saying you flip-flop, so it's you talking.

MADELINE X

*(Taking the globe from the **RINGMASTER**, as **LOLA MAE** receives another from a **CLOWN**, as does **SCHLOMO**)*

So whatever you say isn't important.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

That's not quite right.

MADELINE X

Hold it! Right there.

(They run center lifting their globes — each of which is topped by a derby — into the air. Then they set them gently on the floor, and as the globes adjust themselves on the carpet, they all take three steps away and look back at them over their shoulders)

MADELINE X

It could be terribly important to start being stupid.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Too easy.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I don't know if Sonya Vovonovich finds this easy, but maybe it's because of my personality.

*(A little bell sounds once, and the **CLOWNS** run on and take away the globes.)*

MADELINE X

Okay. Be just — a little more stupid.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

How about being totally stupid?

MADELINE X

No, just a little stupid. Stupid in a way nobody could possibly notice.

*(Another little bell, and the **CLOWNS** enter in silence in a conga line. Then music begins to rise. It quickly becomes quite loud, as the conga line circles the room and the others go to the walls and tear off paper, which they crumple and throw to the floor. Then the music lowers, and **MADELINE X** holds up her hands for attention)*

MADELINE X

Now wait a minute, I know all about this craziness from before.

*(The music rises again, and all run to form two lines on either side of the stage. They flap their arms, run center and stomp, and react with a cry of pain as if each had received a stomp on their foot. They run back into their two lines and circle again waving their arms, and now as the music starts to fade, **SCHLOMO** comes out alone doing a funny dance step of his own invention. He suddenly realizes he is all alone and everyone is watching him. His face reddens. He runs to the table embarrassed, and reaches into a hole in the center of the table. All the others crowd around to see what he is going to extract. He lifts a white ice cream Popsicle into the air. The others retreat and he licks at it lasciviously)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Now Schlomo Leviticus feels like a human being again. How do you feel?

MADELINE X

No different.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Would you like a Popsicle?

MADELINE X

Okay.

*(She takes one from **SCHLOMO**. One of the **CLOWNS** has a mirror with handles that allows it to be*

whirled, casting flashes of light around the room. As it whirls and flashes, ***MADELINE X*** *backs against the projection screen, dizzy from the flashing mirror)*

MADELINE X

How come you didn't offer me one of these earlier?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Oh, it just didn't occur to me.

MADELINE X

But it occurred to you to give me an injection.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Of course.

MADELINE X

How strange you are, Rabbi.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

You're sure you're being objective?

MADELINE X

(Shielding her eyes)

No.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

After all, certain chemicals are, or could be, profoundly affecting the human brain.

(***LOLA MAE*** *and* ***SONYA*** *have each taken a small golden hammer, and they hold them up toward their heads)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Oh, shit, this is really gonna hurt.

(Both smash themselves and moan, then run and get Popsicles)

MADELINE X

I know all about this craziness from before.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Is everyone enjoying their Popsicles?

MADELINE X

I hardly started my licking my own.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

What flavor is this very peculiar Popsicle?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

It's my own invention.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Shlomo Leviticus, what I said was —

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Shhh!

(He grins delightedly, as the music that has been playing in the background rises)

It's fish flavor.

(He whirls to the music, lifting his Popsicle)

It's fish flavor.

ALL

Ugh!

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

See why I didn't offer you something I knew you wouldn't enjoy so much?

MADELINE X

Okay, why don't you try giving me another shot?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Oh? Do I always do everything I'm told?

*(He shrugs, takes out another hypodermic needle, but instead of giving **MADELINE X** an injection, he turns around and sticks*

himself in the behind. After an initial wince of pain, he puts away the needle and shrugs)

Schlomo Leviticus felt nothing. I must have developed an immunity.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

*(She sits on the floor, legs spread like a little girl, and she holds out her Popsicle toward **SCHLOMO**)*

How about a taste of this, Rabbi?

*(The dotted string has again been stretched across the stage, and a small white panel is held behind **LOLA MAE**, framing her as she sprawls on the floor)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

A fresh Popsicle, why not? I'm already habituated.

(He ducks under the string to join her in front of the panel. He takes her Popsicle and licks it, then offers to pass it back to her)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Please, you finish it.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

We'll take turns.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I can't. Not after you've licked it.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

We've had a discussion, my dear. So whatever it is you're going to catch from me — you've catched it.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

It's in bad taste, Rabbi.

*(A **CLOWN** extends a stick, at the end of which is a white disk with painted eyes and a realistic three-dimensional nose protruding from its center. This is maneuvered in front of **LOLA MAE'S** face, and she holds the false nose with two fingers, as if it were her own)*

MADELINE X

Ah, that's why she's holding her nose.

(As she angles to get a better look, she walks into the dotted string, pulling it downstage with her body)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Does this make me look pretty?

MADELINE X

Not at all.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Okay. Does it make me look disgusting?

MADELINE X

That could be a mental association.

*(The **RINGMASTER** holds another disk on a stick in front of the nose disk, hiding it. His has a checkerboard pattern)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(Rising, going to a shelf to collect a wicker box)

It must be frustrating to find yourself continually in the neighborhood of associations instead of facts.

MADELINE X

I make up my own facts, thank you — even if they last only a fraction of a millisecond.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

This is more than a millisecond.

MADELINE X

That's because you're not paying attention.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(Holding out the box)

Here's for paying attention, ladies. Let's see what's inside the rabbi's box?

*(**LOLA MAE** comes, opens the box, and pulls out a stuffed rabbit. There is a pause)*

MADELINE X

Something's missing.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

What?

MADELINE X

What's missing from this picture?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Hey, could you think of this as a picture?

(She ponders this, then puts the rabbit back in the box)

MADELINE X

I think I know what was missing.

*(**SONYA** offers a bouquet of red flowers. **MADELINE X** looks at her. Then turns away)*

No. Wait a minute.

(She goes to the box, takes out the rabbit. It hangs down from her hand as she holds it by the

ears, but she doesn't look at it. She stares into space)

Something's missing.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

You must be picking up on some revelatory quiver.

MADELINE X

Maybe I just glanced toward a mirror.

*(A **CLOWN** passes by her, revolving a mirror which makes **MADELINE X** hide her eyes from its flashing)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

At the exact moment all things were quivering?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Let's look again.

(She opens the box again, and takes out a velvet bag, which she holds against the projection screen as she fumbles inside it)

MADELINE X

There's no mirror.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Looking in her bag)

Is God here?

MADELINE X

What a ridiculous question.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(As she turns the bag inside out, and the six-foot-high God mask appears at the side for just a moment, before being covered by the ringmaster's red curtain and being whisked offstage)

Is God in this thing?

MADELINE X

I don't want to answer questions about that!

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Who asked?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Let's look again.

(She peers deep into her bag)

Is God here?

MADELINE X

Who?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Whispering)

God god god!

*(The three chair panels are carried quickly to position, and **LOLA MAE, SONYA**, and **SCHLOMO** try to sit and fall to the floor)*

OTHERS

(Whispering as they fall)

God god god!

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

*(Rising quickly and pointing to the bouquet of red flowers **SONYA** dropped earlier)*

Look! The Rose Room!

(They are all hurled violently to the wall, as the lights change suddenly)

MADELINE X

What made those beautiful flowers tumble to the carpet?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Sonya Vovonovich does not know.

MADELINE X

I repeat. What made the flowers tumble?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Isn't it beautiful in this room?

MADELINE X

See? You learned that from me.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Do you think I'm beautiful?

*(In a far corner, three **CLOWNS** appear, each with a double-sided mirror with handles that they spin in front of them at chest level, and **MADELINE X** moves away from the wall)*

MADELINE X

What made the flowers tumble, what's causing my eyes to see, what's causing my tongue to move? Probably nothing.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Something must have made it happen.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(Pointing to the mirrors)

Schlomo Leviticus says optics —

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Of course. Of course.

MADELINE X

(Turns away momentarily blinded by the flash from the mirrors, which then exit)

Except the one thing I can't see is myself!

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Are you sure?

MADELINE X

I'm missing. Who's free to contradict that?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Sonya Vovonovich would be happy.

MADELINE X

Somebody give me a kiss, please.

*(**SCHLOMO** kisses her hand, and she pulls away)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Does this do anything for you, Madeline X?

MADELINE X

I don't think so.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Look again, please.

MADELINE X

At what?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

That's not a relevant option.

MADELINE X

*(Taking a drink of water offered by **LOLA MAE**)*

Okay — I just looked again.

*(**SONYA** is holding out her arms toward **MADELINE X**)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

— Saw?

MADELINE X

Nothing special.

*(She takes another sip of water, and spits it out over **SONYA**)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Hey, now I am dirty!

MADELINE X

(Crossing to in front of the white projection screen)

Okay. I was able to erase my thoughts for a fraction of a second.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Thank you very much. Then what?

MADELINE X

Nothing. Thank you very much.

*(A **CLOWN** carries out the white lozenge again, but this time holds it in front of **MADELINE X**'s face. Then the **RINGMASTER** enters and holds a stick with a small white disk on the end in front of the lozenge. White on white. There is a pause)*

MADELINE X

(Hidden behind the disk and the lozenge)

I don't want a hole in the center of my life.

*(Disk and lozenge are whisked off, and **MADELINE X** throws the stuffed rabbit into the center of the room)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Hey, I just saw it!

MADELINE X

What?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

That dead rabbit you've been carrying!

MADELINE X

But I'd already been holding it a long time.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I just saw it!

MADELINE X

Okay.

(She picks it up again)

Me too.

(She drops it) I just saw it. *(She starts stomping on it)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

When I say "a dead rabbit," that takes considerable powers of discrimination —

(The stomping of the rabbit seems to make the three of them dizzy, and they fall to the floor around the rabbit)

MADELINE X

Well, if you call those things we hold in common powers of discrimination.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I do. Exactly right.

*(**MADELINE X** rises quickly and throws the rabbit out of the room)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Screaming in anguish)

You hurt the dead bunny!

*(There is a loud crash, and the lights flash blindingly bright for just a second, making everyone stagger. A **CLOWN** reextends the dotted string across the stage)*

MADELINE X

(Holding her head from the crash)

That's not nice.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Recovering also)

Okay, okay, okay, okay! Let me play teacher for a moment and I'll ask you this: Did you ever try using a special focused beam of light to cast a shadow? Using your hands only — but manipulating them in such a way that the shadow cast is the shadow of a cute little rabbit? See?

*(She makes a shadow rabbit, and **MADELINE X** comes to see and bumps into **LOLA MAE**)*

Just stand back a little bit!

MADELINE X

Oh, that's so cute. Do it again. How do you do that?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

You can do it too, Medeline X.

MADELINE X

Me?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Try it.

*(**MADELINE X** looks at her hands, and plunges downstage, pulling the center of the string with her, as **LOLA MAE** and **SONYA** pull back against the walls as if afraid that **MADELINE X** is creating a warp in the space of the room. At the front of the stage, far away from the projection screen, which is at the back wall, **MADELINE X** holds up her hands, ready to make a rabbit)*

MADELINE X

I don't think this is going to work but I'm willing to try.

(She winds her fingers together)

This isn't working. There's nothing but light.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

You haven't put your hands into it.

MADELINE X

Ah? You see? This is no recognizable rabbit. What's wrong?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(Entering at the side of the room)

Dear Madeline X, what's wrong?

(He taps her on the shoulder)

What's missing from this picture?

MADELINE X

Well, it's true — it could be thought of as a PICTURE.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

(He stretches his arms and yawns)

Ah, that said of course, a multiplicity of other possibilities shut down for the night.

(He goes and curls up in a chair to the side, where he will soon fall asleep)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Interesting — what is missing from this picture?

MADELINE X

It's a hole.

*(The electronic hum rises, and **MADELINE X** moves upstage to put her hands on the white projection screen. The noise stops)*

It's a hole.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Not a hole, but the opposite.

*(Three **CLOWNS** enter with large books under their arms)*

MADELINE X

That's what's missing.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

What is missing?

*(The **CLOWNS** have opened their books, and revealed are three large pictures of an identical mountain)*

MADELINE X

Something really big.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

It's a mountain.

MADELINE X

It's a hole in the opposite direction and that's what's interesting.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Really?

MADELINE X

Yes. Why do I have to repeat myself?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

You don't have to repeat yourself, just put your money where your mouth is. Let's go mountain climbing. Isn't that what you were talking about?

*(The **CLOWNS** have gone)*

MADELINE X

How should I know?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I know — how about opening a new chapter of our mental experience?

MADELINE X

Where is this mountain we're going to climb?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I can make reference to it by showing you this tiny little representation.

(She takes a big book from a shelf and takes out a postcard tucked in its pages — one side of it shows a picture of the same mountain)

MADELINE X

A real mountain? One that really exists?

*(They are startled by a pair of mountain-climbing boots thrown in from offstage. **SONYA** picks them up and dangles them in front of **MADELINE X**)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Klippity Klopping up the cute little mountain.

*(She knocks them together and lets them fall to the floor. The **RINGMASTER** has also entered carrying heavy boots. After **SONYA'S** boots fall, he lets his own fall to the floor with a thud. **LOLA MAE** picks up these boots and slowly crosses the room, as mystical music is heard in the distance)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I can assure you . . .

MADELINE X

What?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Lola Mae Duprae says, Even though lots and lots of this particular mountain don't exist and therefore can be said not to exist, we can try climbing all the way to the top, even if it may be impossible to have the experience of doin' such a thing.

MADELINE X

Can I reinterpret that please? It's going to be sort of a mental adventure.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Oh, no, Lola Mae Duprae would never say anything that peculiar.

MADELINE X

Then can you explain how we go about climbing it?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Well . . . maybe once upon a time we did — but maybe we have to do it again without knowin' we ever did it before.

MADELINE X

This is not clear to me.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

*(The light in the room has become dim, and **SONYA** crouches in the shadows)*

My dear, my most darling Madeline X —

*(The mystical music rises as **LOLA MAE** lifts her arms in the air to sing)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Yodel-odel a-he hoo!

SONYA VOVONOVICH

*(Calling out over the music, as all the **CLOWNS** and the **RINGMASTER** reenter with books they place against the rear wall, and then open, displaying the mountain picture as if it were hanging on the red wall)*

From her

faraway mountain kingdom, Sonya Vovonovich says, Your hopes? They lie in the wrong direction.

MADELINE X

But I should be hopeful?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Oh, no. I did not say that.

MADELINE X

(Turning to study the mountain pictures)

A very interesting mountain after all.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(She has the little postcard, and holds it up)

This is your true opinion? For me, Sonya Vovonovich, here is the better little mountain.

*(The music rises again, and the **CLOWNS** and the **RINGMASTER** slowly turn and carry their pictures down to the front of the stage, displaying them to the audience. **MADELINE X** comes down with them, and peers at the pictures from between two **CLOWNS**)*

MADELINE X

Aside from their relative multiplicity, they look much the same.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

My little one is absolutely different.

MADELINE X

Why do you prefer that little one?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Because my little one leads me to the other bigger ones.

MADELINE X

So in the end, you prefer that one.

(She indicates the bigger ones)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

This is not what I am saying.

MADELINE X

(Dizzy now, trying to clarify things in her mind)

But if that little one leads you to this one, and that fact is the reason of your preference —?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

You're not thinking about this clearly.

*(**LOLA MAE** deposits a coil of heavy rope onto the carpet behind **MADELINE X**, who turns to see what it is)*

Now you are trying too hard.

MADELINE X

What's that for?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Mountain-climbing equipment.

MADELINE X

I don't think climbable mountains abound here.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Guess what. Madeline X is right.

MADELINE X

Hey — should I put the rope back?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I suppose for neatness. Okay.

*(**MADELINE X** bends to get the rope, but freezes in that position)*

What's wrong?

MADELINE X

Suddenly I feel dizzy.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Sit down.

*(**MADELINE X** collapses onto the floor)*

Well, I didn't mean on the floor, Madeline X.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Sit on a chair, beautiful teacher.

MADELINE X

The teacher is too dizzy to get up.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I didn't say get up, I said sit!

MADELINE X

Look. Anybody can do what you're doing —

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

What she doing, teacher?

MADELINE X

Causing a certain disorientation.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I'm not causing any disorientation on purpose.

MADELINE X

Oh, yes.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Oh, no.

*(**MADELINE X** struggles to get off the floor, but keeps falling back down)*

MADELINE X

Making the names of things questionable is an attempt at manipulation. And don't suggest I sit down because I already am.

(She finally gains her feet)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I'm going to get you another drink of water.

MADELINE X

(Sarcastically)

Well, thank you for your generous offer!

(She exits)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I could refill the pitcher —

MADELINE X

(Bounding back into the room)

Did you say PICTURE?

*(A shocked pause. **LOLA MAE** looks about nervously)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Which one?

MADELINE X

The little one.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Running to the center of the room, still carrying the pitcher she was about to refill)

Why the little one as opposed to the other bigger ones that were all over this place?

MADELINE X

Wait a minute!

(They wait)

That means you're as hungry for meaning as I think you are.

*(This accusation seems to upset **LOLA MAE**, who looks about for help, then pours herself a glass of water but in her nervousness spills it all over herself, and she shouts out to no one in particular)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I am no such thing!

(She runs from the room)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Liar! That means I agree.

*(She runs after **LOLA MAE**, and **MADELINE X** tries to follow, but slips and falls on the floor. There is a pause)*

MADELINE X

I guess that means I'm alone. Maybe now I can tell the truth about myself.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Schlomo Leviticus is still here, my dear.

(He has been sleeping in his chair all this time)

MADELINE X

(Turning around, getting up)

Excuse me, I didn't know anything about that!

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

I'm in plain sight, my darling, but I'm hidden.

MADELINE X

Hidden?

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Didn't you notice?

MADELINE X

Hidden?

(She covers her eyes and counts to ten)

I better make an inventory.

*(A loud buzzer, and loud music, which then fades down as **MADELINE X** starts to take inventory, and all the others, **CLOWNS** included, come onstage and start checking the objects in the room)*

This chair, that wall, that cabinet, this floor, carpet, bookcase, table, shelf —

(She stops and turns to the others, who stop moving)

Well, I am pleased to see everybody ready to learn something important. Question number one: How many of us does it take to change things in this universe completely? Twelve —?

*(She turns one **CLOWN** to face her)*

Including you? Seventy-five —?

(She turns another)

Including you? One thousand one hundred and twenty-one —?

(She turns a few more)

Including the rest of you? Answer. One person is enough to change things completely.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

This is new information.

MADELINE X

Ofcourse. If I went crazy, all my problems would be solved.

(They all kneel to her, then quickly rise. But she gestures them to the floor, and they follow her instructions. Then she raises her arms, and they copy her, then she swings them down and they bow down on the floor to her. Satisfied, she continues her explanation)

Because I'd be in limbo. But the amazing thing is — your problems also. They'd be taken care of. Because — and this is going to be a big shock to your electrical systems, ladies — ZAP!

*(As she imitates an electric shock, the music pops on again very loud, and the others run to the center of the stage, where **MADELINE X** stamps her foot once, and they all react as if she'd stepped down hard on each one's foot. They scream in pain and run off, except for **LOLA MAE**, who backs away, baffled)*

Because I'm the only universe there is! Your universe doesn't exist.

(Pause)

What part of the universe doesn't exist, please? Whatever part isn't my own part.

(Pause)

Not convinced? To clinch my argument I will now act noninsane.

*(A pause. **LOLA MAE** stares at her)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

It's kinda hard to tell.

(Another pause)

Well, I'm sorry, but this isn't the first time it was kinda hard to tell the difference between crazy and what seemed crazy and what wasn't crazy.

MADELINE X

Surprise!

*(A loud crash, followed by music, makes **LOLA MAE** scream. She whirls to see a **CLOWN** in the doorway, holding the redwrapped package)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

It *WAS* a surprise!

*(She takes the package and gives it to **MADELINE X**)*

MADELINE X

Yes, it was.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Okay. I can make an obvious gloss — well, two obvious glosses.

MADELINE X

Surprise!

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

First, you and me, Madeline X and Lola Mae Duprae, we are such reality-evading personalities that we prefer mystification to clarity, as an escape from a reality we're too weak or immature to handle.

*(She brings her hand down in a hard slap onto the package, which falls from **MADELINE X'S** hands. They both step back with a little scream as it hits the floor. The music stops)*

But number two — somewhat more complimentary to the both of us —

MADELINE X

Is this what Madeline X is teaching?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

All mystification — you know what I mean?

(There is a pause)

MADELINE X

I know what you mean.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

All mystification, before clarified, suggests a hidden something or other of great importance for which I, Lola Mae Duprae, have to confess —

*(She takes **MADELINE X'S** hand)*

I am desperately hungry.

MADELINE X

This must be what I'm teaching, right?

*(The music is heard quietly, as the **CLOWNS** again set out the painted chair panels. **LOLA MAE** crosses slowly to lean against the panels. As she does so, her personality seems to change. She seems to mature and her Southern accent becomes seductive rather than silly)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Not quite right, Madeline X. See, any premature clarification, because a clarification by definition is premature and reveals only itself, the premature, rather than the unfathomable something I've been able to intuit.

*(She turns her back on **MADELINE X**)*

You understand of course —?

MADELINE X

(As if hypnotized)

I understand, of course.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

That I'm speaking in your voice?

(There is a pause)

MADELINE X

Of course I understand that. Free-associate.

*(There is another loud crash and a flash of very bright light. **MADELINE X** winces and turns to hide her eyes, whispering, "That's not nice." But **LOLA MAE** seems unaffected and slowly puts on a pair of white gloves)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Her voice suddenly deep and languorous)

What drug are you really on, little lady?

MADELINE X

What drug are you on?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Oh, no. You tell me — what drug are you on?

MADELINE X

Would you believe me if I told you that what I want is to have a powerful drug experience without taking a drug?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

All things are put together in a certain way.

MADELINE X

Right.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I just want them to be put together in a different way.

*(The chair panels are taken away, and **MADELINE X** runs to one of the wall pads, tears off some paper, crumples it, and throws it to the floor)*

MADELINE X

Okay. A follows B.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Tearing paper and throwing it to the floor)

Don't you mean B follows A?

MADELINE X

(Running to a pad on the other side of the room, tearing more paper)

But B could be totally inside A. Think about it. Doesn't that mean B could be skipped — completely skipped?

(There is a pause)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

You look very satisfied with yourself, Madeline X.

MADELINE X

Maybe I'm on a very rare drug.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Lola Mae Duprae — remember her? She says, "What does it do? This very rare drug?"

(A pause)

MADELINE X

Nothing.

*(The **RINGMASTER** enters slowly, and places a white disk which is on the end of a stick, so it covers **MADELINE X'S** face.)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

If it doesn't do anything honey, it's not much of a drug.

MADELINE X

Wrong again.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

How come?

MADELINE X

Because it's very powerful.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I'd say by definition —

*(A **CLOWN** comes and places a similar disk in from of **LOLA MAE'S** face)*

— if it doesn't do anything, it's not.

MADELINE X

That's why it's powerful.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Because it has no effect?

MADELINE X

It has a big effect.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

What?

MADELINE X

It doesn't do anything.

*(They both push away the disks, then **SONYA** appears, and all three run to separate corners of the room and take handkerchiefs from hiding places near each of them and hold the handkerchiefs up to their faces. They turn their backs to each other, breathe deeply, and fall to the floor, giggling)*

See? It doesn't do anything.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Then I've achieved the same effect without drugs.

MADELINE X

(Rising)

Wrong.

(She swivels her hips to unheard music)

That's where you are wrong, Lola Mae Duprae!

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

*(Giggling at **MADELINE X'S** dance)*

That's not nice.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Still on the floor)

Why is this happening to us?

MADELINE X

I can think of one reason. It would be the result of strong emotions.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Why would anyone want strong emotions?

MADELINE X

I didn't say I want any such thing. I said it could happen.

*(There is a loud buzzer and **SCHLOMO** comes on with a suitcase. The electronic hum is discernible)*

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

I have here a powerful drug, ladies. It's called "Drink me."

*(He extracts a bottle with a label that reads "Drink me!" **MADELINE X** studies it for a few seconds)*

MADELINE X

Drink me . . .

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Ah, a very interesting interpretation.

MADELINE X

It wasn't an interpretation.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Holding out a heavy book)

Can you read this, then — which might need a little interpretation?

MADELINE X

Hey, are you as hungry for meaning —

(She snaps her fingers and the hum vanishes)

— as I think you are?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Read this and find out.

MADELINE X

No, thank you.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Far upstage in the corner of the room)

Okay, Madeline X — can you read the heartbreakin' thing that's carved in stone on the top of this doorway leadin' outa this room once and for all?

MADELINE X

I don't have to read that.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

It says, "Penetrate such a door and everything changes."

MADELINE X

(Turning away from them, to herself)

Once upon a time I memorized those very words.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Read it anyway.

MADELINE X

(Crossing up to the door)

What does it do when I read it?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

We don't know.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

You tell us. We're scared.

*(The electronic hum becomes very loud, as **MADELINE X** passes through the door. At the same moment, two **CLOWNS** run on with the white cloth; they hold it shoulder high in front of the door, between the rear wall and a side wall at a*

*45-degree angle, but **SONYA** and **LOLA MAE** immediately take over. Each taking an end of the cloth from a **CLOWN**, they reverse sides, flip-flopping the cloth but keeping it taut at shoulder height as **MADELINE X** reenters and comes to stand behind the cloth, looking over its edge at the audience. The electronic tone stops*

suddenly, and there is dead silence)

MADELINE X

Nothing.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Right. But what's it like?

MADELINE X

Nothing.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

You know — in that other universe?

MADELINE X

No communication is possible.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

That's what I thought too.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

That's bullshit!

*(**MADELINE X** walks quickly forward into the cloth, as **LOLA MAE** and **SONYA** close in behind her still holding their ends taut, so that **MADELINE X** appears encased in white from the neck down, with the two taut lengths of cloth like folded wings behind her. At the same time the **CLOWNS** set out the chair panels on a diagonal line that echoes the line of the white cloth that **SONYA** and **LOLA MAE** pull taut behind **MADELINE X'S** shoulders. **SCHLOMO** creeps behind the chairs to watch what is happening)*

MADELINE X

I mean, there's communication on certain subjects, but those are only the important subjects, which are therefore the important subjects.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

What a lot of bullshit!

MADELINE X

That's what I leave you with, ladies. Bullshit.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Bullshit!

MADELINE X

Yes . . . But in some ways, this is really interesting.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Please, my darling, continue to be interesting forever.

MADELINE X

(She turns to him, and the cloth falls from her body)

Nobody knows how long it takes this drug to wear off.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

What drug?

MADELINE X

(Going to the cabinet, she starts to toss items off the shelves)

The one I took.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

Where are the drugs? There are no drugs in this room.

MADELINE X

Oh, I didn't take DIFFERENT ones, Rabbi.

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

All the same one?

MADELINE X

Evidently always the same ONE, Rabbi of my dreams.

*(Mystic music has begun, and the **CLOWNS** and **RINGMASTER** enter and place open books against the wall, revealing in each book a large pictures of a rose)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

That is bullshit!

MADELINE X

Exactly what I leave you with, ladies.

(She exits)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Calling after her)

The roses are for you, Madeline X!

MADELINE X

(Reentering through another door)

Really? But there are no roses.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Not even absent roses?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

But this room is NAMED the Rose Room —

MADELINE X

(Ignoring the open books)

I would have thought that since there are no roses in the Rose Room, the fact of their absence would be especially potent.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

This room has been renamed —

*(The **CLOWNS** and **RINGMASTER**, keeping the books up against the wall, turn a page to reveal pictures of the mountain)*

— the room of invisible levitations.

MADELINE X

That doesn't interest me. I'd like to critique my own life, please.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Go right ahead.

MADELINE X

My own life? I think it's brilliant.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

That's your subjective impression.

MADELINE X

Okay, let's try another perspective. It's a total failure.

*(A pause, the **CLOWNS** leave quickly)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I'm sorry — I can't tell the difference.

*(A **CLOWN** reenters with a bouquet of red flowers, which he hands to **MADELINE X**)*

MADELINE X

Ah — are those beautiful flowers for me?

(She lets the flowers fall to the carpet)

Well, excuse me if I'm a little dizzy, but don't suggest I sit down because I already tried.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Please smell the flowers.

MADELINE X

(Looking down at the flowers that lie at her feet)

That could be a terrible idea.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

But why?

*(The **CLOWNS** and **RINGMASTER** run back into the room and again place the open books with pictures of roses against the wall. Everyone but **MADELINE X** studies the pictures)*

SONYA VOVONOVICH

*(Turning back to **MADELINE X**)*

Beautiful?

MADELINE X

No, thank you. Let's just say —

(She crosses to the cabinet and leans back against it with her arms outstretched)

I've already been wounded. Badly.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

I don't see any blood, Madeline X.

MADELINE X

It's pouring from all my pretend wounds in ways I predicted.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Oh, Madeline X, how did you get to be so Godlike?

MADELINE X

Godlike?

(She moves away from the cabinet and thinks, then nods her head slightly)

Well —

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Very excited)

See? See the way you say "well" and nod your head?

MADELINE X

The way I say "well"? The way I nod my head?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

The way you do that.

MADELINE X

Nod my head.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

And say "well."

MADELINE X

Well —

(She nods it slightly)

It was involuntary.

*(**SONYA** swoons to the floor)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Involuntary? Are we in limbo?

MADELINE X

I have nothing to say.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Hard to believe.

MADELINE X

Haven't I proved it? In retrospect?

(Mystic music is heard again)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

I have nothing to say.

MADELINE X

Let me show you something.

(She takes a framed photograph down from a shelf)

SCHLOMO LEVITICUS

I don't want to see that!

(He runs out)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

What's that?

MADELINE X

It's a snapshot I took of this room when nobody was watching. Now — where am I in this photograph that I took?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

You're not in the photograph.

MADELINE X

Then I haven't been here, apparently, in spite of my vivid memories?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Of course you were here.

MADELINE X

I don't see myself in the photograph.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Of course not. You took the photograph, so you were standing behind the camera, which also isn't visible.

*(The **CLOWNS** and **RINGMASTER** have entered, each spinning a mirror in front of them)*

MADELINE X

Should I have pointed it toward a mirror?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

That didn't interest you.

MADELINE X

Why not?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Obviously, it wasn't a mirror that attracted your attention, but the empty room.

*(**MADELINE X** throws down the photo and runs from the room, as the spinning mirrors are directed toward the door through which she exited. Then the music suddenly stops, the mirrors freeze, and **MADELINE X** runs back into the room)*

MADELINE X

At the time, it's true, I thought there was magic in this room, but I wasn't enjoying myself.

*(The mirrors begin to spin again, and **MADELINE X** runs to join hands in a circle with **LOLA MAE** and **SONYA**)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Why not?

(They revolve the circle they have made)

MADELINE X

Personal considerations were tormenting me. My emotional life was in upheaval.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Is it now?

MADELINE X

Relatively.

(She breaks off the circle)

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Relative to what?

MADELINE X

I suspect that here, right now, I am surrounded by equal magic, but that doesn't redeem my current experience.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Find a mirror.

MADELINE X

It would have to be a very powerful mirror, wouldn't it?

SONYA VOVONOVICH

What makes the power of a mirror?

MADELINE X

Its invisibleness.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Then maybe it's already here?

MADELINE X

Ah!

(She picks up the photograph, which had fallen to the floor)

I'm sure that's right.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Okay, touch it.

MADELINE X

(She studies the photo, then drops it again)

I can't.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Why not?

MADELINE X

I don't know why, but I can't.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

That can't be right.

MADELINE X

Maybe it's optional!

*(The **CLOWNS** run from the room)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

What I mean — you can touch it even if you can't touch what you're seeing.

MADELINE X

*(She starts dancing in place, swiveling her hips at **LOLA MAE**)*

Your choice!

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Don't bother. They took away the mirrors!

MADELINE X

(Posing with her hands over her head)

How many mirror images do you need, darling?

*(The **CLOWNS** have returned and are setting up photographic lights on stands, all aimed at **MADELINE X**)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

So what if it's a reflection? You can always touch the surface of things.

MADELINE X

Don't you get it, everything you've been taught is wrong ladies!

(She exits)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Calling after her)

Hey, I learned wrong things —?

MADELINE X

(Reentering from another door — she goes and slams her hands against the still-illuminated projection screen and the music stops)

Madeline X says — That's wrong!

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Okay, then. All this time I learned right things?

MADELINE X

I'm sorry. If you add up your mistakes, there's no way to redeem them.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

Maybe with a kiss?

MADELINE X

(Turning away disgustedly)

Certainly not with a kiss.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Tearing off paper and throwing it to the floor)

Kiss-kiss-kiss-kiss-kiss-kiss! This must be missed opportunity number one million one thousand one hundred and twenty-one.

MADELINE X

You mean the big bad door into this room should be opened permanently?

*(The **CLOWNS** clap once, and music that had begun stops)*

Or locked forever. Better still — is there a way to do both at once?

*(All the others turn into the walls, turning their backs on **MADELINE X**)*

Ah, this experience of turning away from each other, defeated by circumstances. But — not really defeated. Giving up on life? Yeah — in a way that could be productive.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

How could giving up on life, giving up on anything — how could that be productive?

*(Music begins, and **SCHLOMO** reappears carrying three white Popsicles. **MADELINE X, SONYA**, and **LOLA MAE** each come and take one, and as **SCHLOMO** exits, they move slowly through the room, studying their Popsicles, as the **CLOWNS** set the chair panels around the room)*

MADELINE X

(Thinking to herself)

How could giving up on life be productive? To answer that very interesting question, try stretching out such a moment —

SONYA VOVONOVICH

This moment?

*(**SCHLOMO** has reappeared with a broom, and he is gently sweeping up at the rear of the stage)*

MADELINE X

— any moment — till it lasts a whole lifetime here on gentle mother earth.

*(**SCHLOMO** smiles and points offstage. Slowly, the **RINGMASTER** pushes onstage a three-dimensional tableau on a rolling platform. It features a thin red animal with a giraffelike neck, topped with a white globe for a head, upon which the only feature is a grinning open mouth with bared teeth. On top of its head, a large white dunce cap. Skulls and naked baby dolls festoon its sides, along with streamers and strings of pearls and white flowers. As it's pushed slowly into position, gentle music fills the room, and everyone onstage stares at it in awe)*

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Oh, Madeline X, what's it like — really?

MADELINE X

Here on gentle mother earth?

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Yes.

MADELINE X

(She turns away sadly)

It's hard to touch base.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

Come on, what's it like?

MADELINE X

Careful. Self-information doesn't surface so easy, ladies. Mostly, it's like something really well hidden.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

But what's hidden?

MADELINE X

What's hidden? I could try to say what's hidden, but it's not like the thing that is hidden. *(She crosses to one of the painted chair panels, and prepares to sit)* it's more like . . .

(She sits on the painted chair, and falls to the floor)

SONYA VOVONOVICH

*(After a pause, waiting for **MADELINE X** to rise)*

Ah, more like the hiddenness itself?

MADELINE X

(On her feet again, as if in a trance)

Careful. If I project any intensity, rest assured, I lie.

*(**SONYA** comes and slowly plants a kiss on **MADELINE X**'s cheek. **MADELINE X** waits a moment, then slowly walks away from her)*

There is no real intensity inside me.

SONYA VOVONOVICH

(Whispers)

Liar!

*(**MADELINE X** has crossed to pick up a heavy red hammer that lies at the red animal's feet. She slowly comes down stage, caressing the hammer and holding it up inches from her head)*

MADELINE X

Oh, you can't begin to understand how perverse the rules of self-evolution really are —

(The others take a step toward her and she stops them)

No! Don't ask!

(She drops the hammer, and it hits the floor with a thud that makes everyone back away in fear)

Because instead of having a good effect on you —

(She bends down and picks it up again)

— it'll have a very bad effect on you.

(She crosses up to the animal)

And to say the least, ladies —

(She lifts the hammer, and all cower in fear)

You will be scared stiff.

*(**LOLA MAE** and **SONYA** grab little gold hammers of their own*

*and hold them up next to their heads. **MADELINE X** is whispering now)*

Which is to say — you'll be scared shitless!

*(She turns and hits the base of the red animal with three tremendous thuds — as terrible music rises, echoing those thuds. Everyone cowers in fear as the last blow sends **MADELINE X** ricocheting dizzily downstage, where she moans —)*

Oh, this is really gonna hurt!

*(**LOLA MAE** and **SONYA** hit their own heads and scream, as **MADELINE X** falls dizzily to the floor, and the lights snap out and the music is deafening. In the darkness there is a flash of light, then the lights return, and **MADELINE X** struggles to her feet and lurches over to the cabinet, falling against it with a thud. The music fades and they all turn their faces to the wall as **MADELINE X** recovers, and then steps forward and lifts a hand and speaks quietly)*

MADELINE X

Okay. Hold it right there.

LOLA MAE DUPRAE

(Turning from the wall to look at her)

What do you mean?

MADELINE X

What I said was —

(She takes one more step forward)

Click!

(She snaps her fingers)

Hold it right there.

(She turns her back to us, joining the others in turning her face to the wall. A gentle and happy music rises, and very slowly, the whole cast facing into the walls with their backs to the audience, the stage goes completely dark.)

THE END